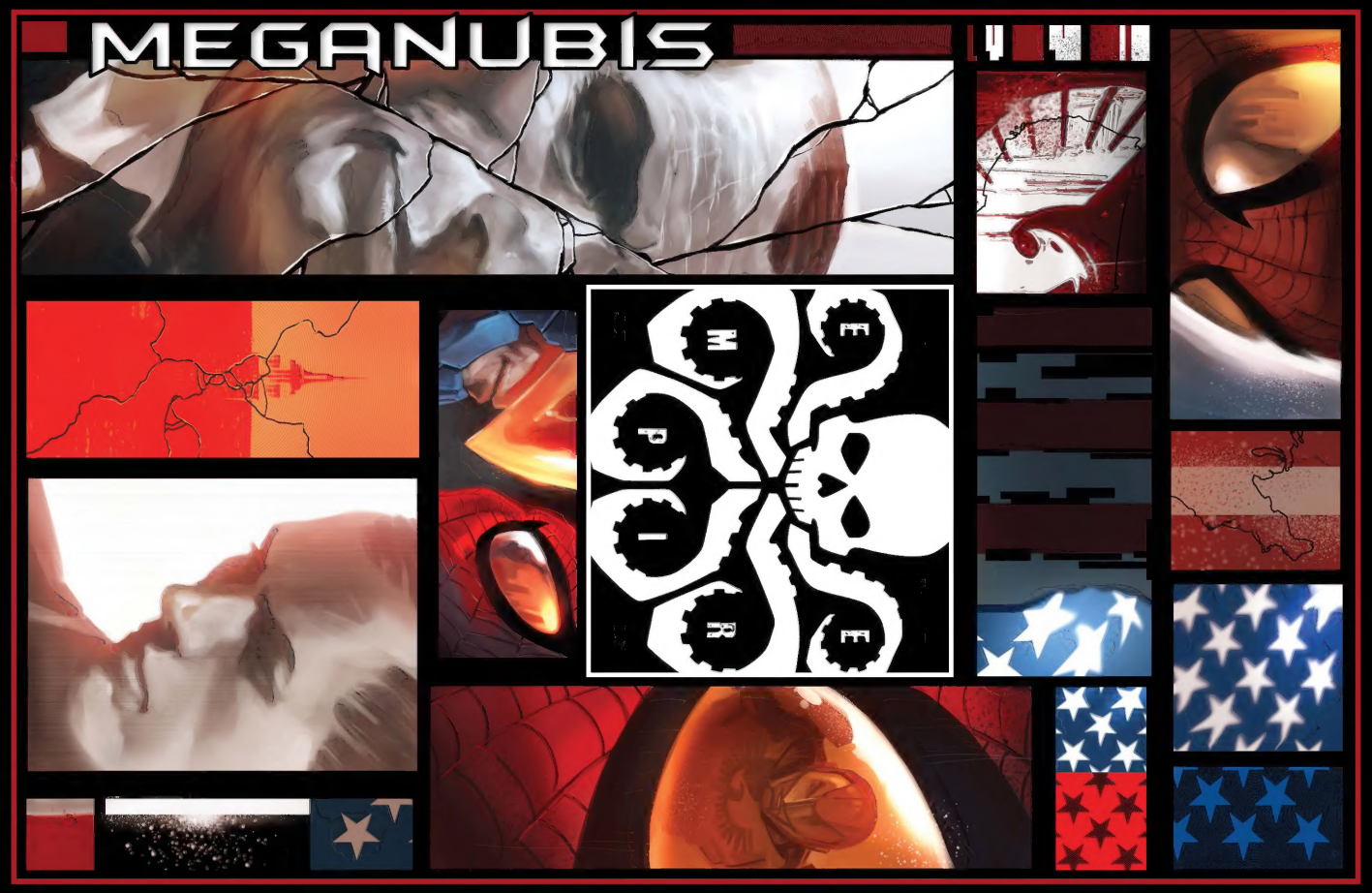
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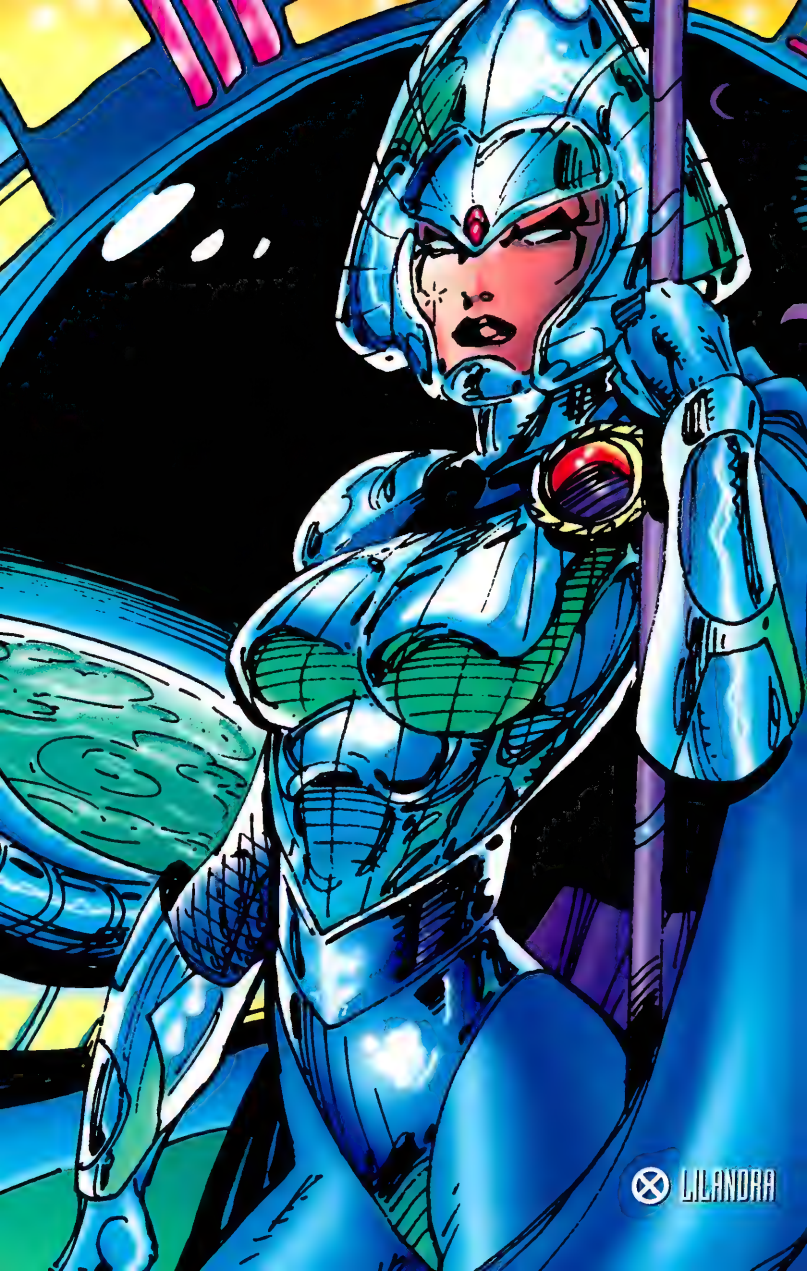
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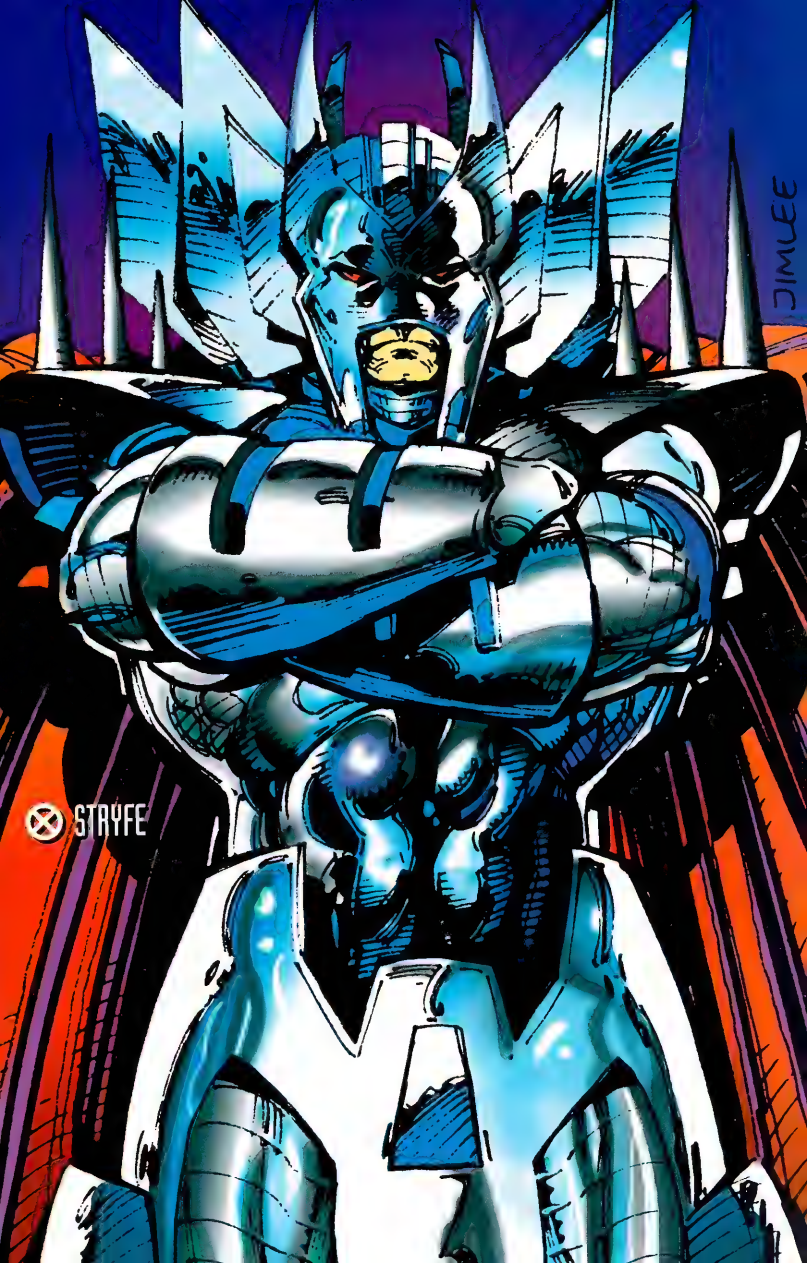
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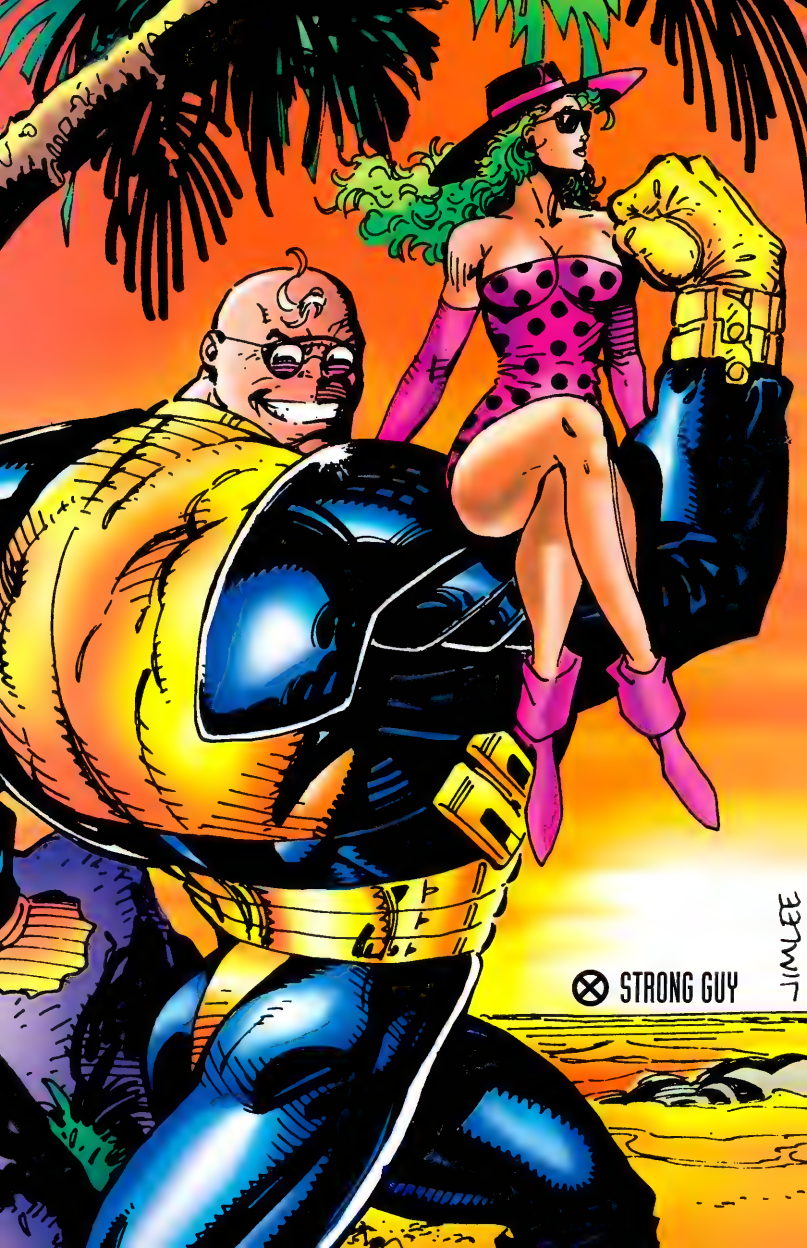
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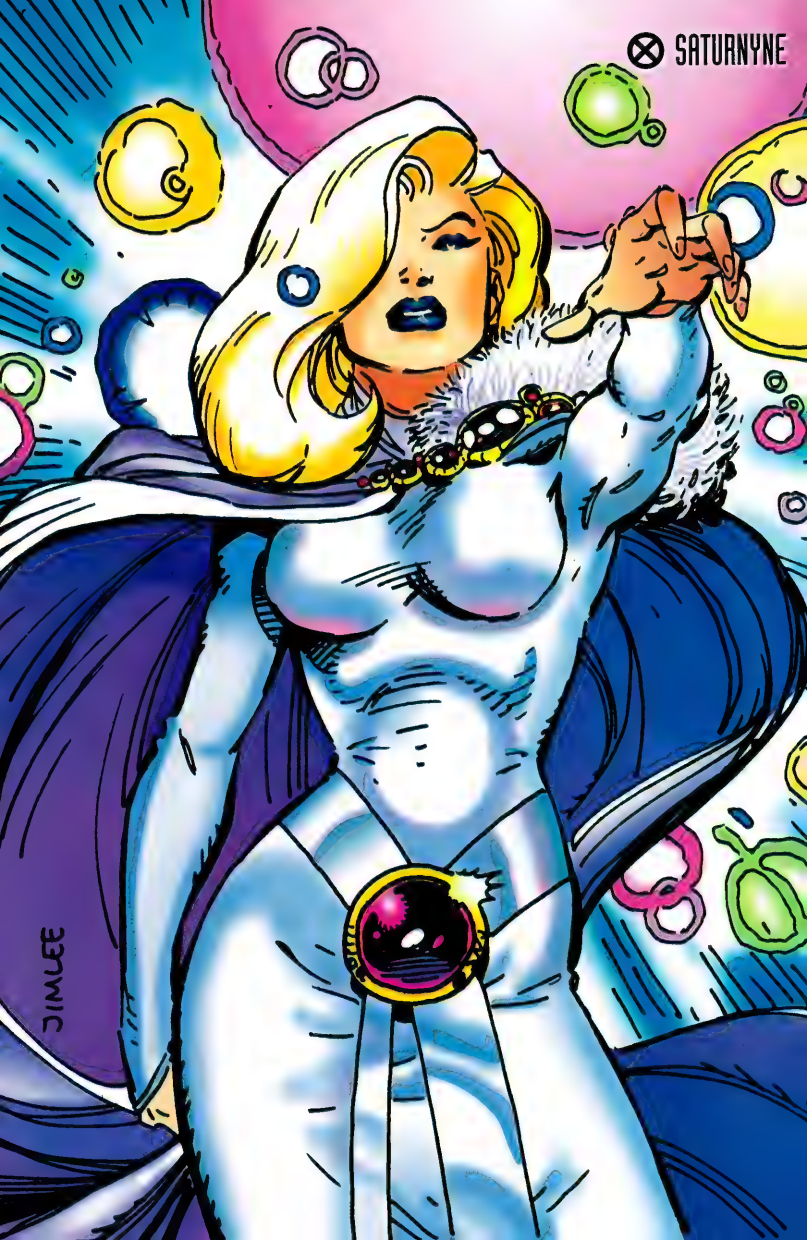
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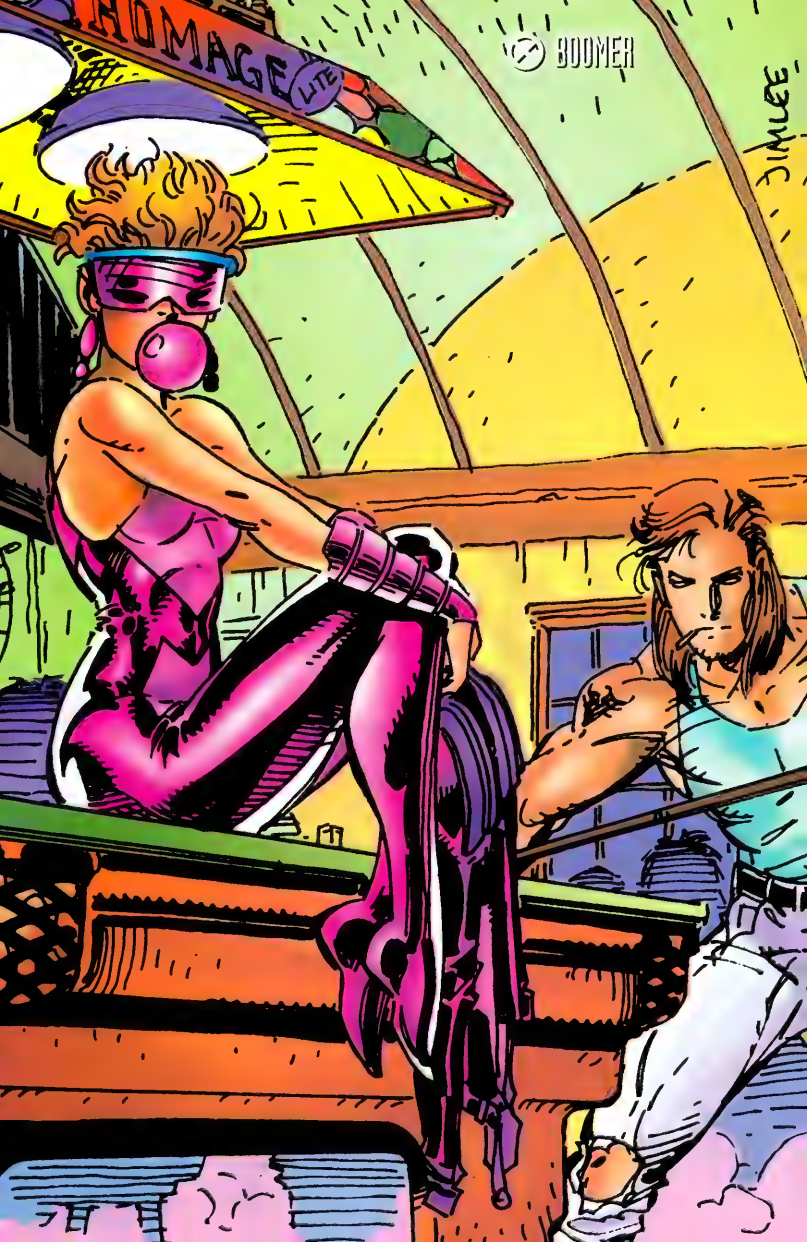
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What can I say? I'm just a fan at heart. That's why it's hard to describe the thrill I experienced when I was chosen to be the artist for the first set of X-Men Trading Cards.

The *X-Men* were always my favorite fictional people while I was growing up. They were more than just comic book characters to me. I felt for the travails of **Jean, Scott, Peter, Logan, Hank, Xavier** and all the others that joined their ranks; and when I began working at Marvel, I knew my experience there would not be complete without an opportunity to draw my childhood friends. Well, that day arrived, and what followed — my run on the UNCANNY X-MEN with Chris Claremont — was more fun than anything I'd ever imagined.

That still wasn't the end, though. In 1991, Chris and I were given the opportunity to redefine the X-Men for a new generation. In July of that year, X-MEN #1 sold 8 million copies and became Marvel's highest-selling title ever. At the same time, Bob Budiansky called and asked if I'd be interested in drawing every card in the Skybox X-Men Set.

I was flattered by the offer, though reluctant to accept because I had to keep up a monthly schedule of my own. Still, after pondering the request for a while, I realized I had no choice. Before me was the opportunity to illustrate nearly every player in the awesome X-Men universe. Not only would I be able to draw all of my own characters, but I could also draw Whilce Portacio's **X-Men,** Rob Liefeld's **X-Force** and Marc Silvestri's **Wolverine** casts. "But the work!," I thought. The set was 105 cards long, and my present work load was harrowing enough. . .oh, who was I fooling! I called Bob back and told him he had himself an artist.

Well, it was a long and hard road, but several months (and several hundred phone calls to and from Bob and his hard-working assistant, David Wohl) later, the card set was finished. Colored exquisitely, I must add, by Paul Mounts, who really carried me at times. Although, to be honest, I rued the day I ever said yes to this project many times during the endeavor, in retrospect, I'm glad I did it.

Well, there you have it. In closing, I'd like to thank Bob Harras and Bob Budiansky for helping a kid turn his dreams into reality — and make a living out of them!

Jim Lee, November, 1993

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